



THE SENSES

Your dog's senses affect how he perceives the world, how he learns and how he communicates. Dogs interpret a message by evaluating multiple communication signals simultaneously.

Sight

Dogs have colour vision but it is a limited colour spectrum compared to people. Dogs see blue-violet, yellow-green and shades of gray. The colours blue and yellow are very distinct to dogs. Dogs have a wider field of vision when compared to people which makes dogs better able to see objects in their peripheral vision. Vision is best at close proximity. Object movement is important for detection at greater distances. Most dogs' visual acuity is poor compared to people and visual acuity may decline with age.

Hearing

Dogs have an incredible sense of hearing and are better able to hear high frequency sounds than people. Dogs can also localize the source of the sound by moving their ears and tilting their head. In communication of messages, sounds of high tonal pitch tend to be distance-decreasing while sounds of low tonal pitch tend to be distance increasing. If you want to your dog to come to you, use a high-pitch voice instead of a stern, deep voice. The sensitivity of a dog's hearing makes it unnecessary to shout when training.

Smell

A dog's nose has approximately 250 million receptor cells compared to about 5 million in people. A dog's sense of smell is 1 to 100 million times better than a human's. Dogs have demonstrated the ability to detect a human fingerprint on a pane of glass after a one month duration. A dog's sense of smell may be its most powerful and important sense. Dogs will sniff the ground in order to obtain information about who was there. It can be great mental stimulation to allow your dog to smell things when out for a walk. Chemical messengers called pheromones which are found in urine, stool, anal sac secretions and glandular secretions are used in every day communication between dogs.

Taste

Taste in dogs is similar to that in people. Dogs are most sensitive to sweets and they enjoy fatty foods. Palatability of food is affected by texture, smell, temperature and taste. Preferences or aversions may be established early in life.

Touch

Touch receptors are located at the base of every hair and especially at the whiskers. Physical contact is important for relationships and maintaining the social bond. Dogs tend to prefer deep muscle massage and long firm strokes from their head to hindquarters. Most dogs are not fond of being hugged. Sensitive areas include the nose, mouth, feet, flanks and tail.